

Rattlesnake Questions and Comments

The following is a complete list of all questions and comments submitted via email and letters sent to our office via fax and postal mail, as well as responses to the rattlesnake conservation plan survey (both electronic and paper forms). Comments from the audience at the public meeting on March 22nd are also included. Below are the questions and comments received as of 12:00 P.M. on April 14, 2017. All new entries since the previous update are inserted at the bottom of each category.

1) Questions/General Comments

Biology

1. Eventually the snakes will consume the available food supply. When the supply of food is gone, and snakes can swim in search of a source of food, what measures will be taken to confine the snakes to the island in question?
2. Won't those babies be confused as to what to do? What will their natural instinct be?
3. Is there any proof scientific or otherwise that the snakes will stay in the area they are told to? After all these are creatures that have the instinct to survive and won't sit and stay where they are placed if the habitat man has picked for them is not fit for their survival despite the statements of Mr. French and others that they only travel 4 miles from the den. Also, from the pictures this area on Zion where they plan to release them is heavily wooded so how will they bask in the sunlight when the area is heavily shaded by trees?
 - I move my bird feeder to different parts of the yard and every time the birds go where the food is. How long will it be until the food source dwindles on Zion and they have to travel farther to hunt and eventually find a den closer to food sources and places accessible to the public?
4. Scientific data has shown that these snakes travel, and can travel at least 4 miles or more and they can also swim. Data also clearly shows that these snakes can strike unprovoked. However NO scientific data or real life facts exist which show these snakes are NOT a danger - they most certainly are. There are also NO true scientific facts that prove these snakes will NOT travel or swim.
5. Can rattlesnakes swim?
6. Discuss the role of Timber rattlesnakes in the ecosystem.
7. Is there any data on the useful value of these snakes in terms of ecological balance?
8. Rattlesnakes can't swim?? I beg to differ.
9. How can we be certain that the food supply on the island will last? What if the snakes intentionally migrate due to a depleted food supply? Who will monitor the shore line on the mainland to make sure no snakes get off the island.
10. Timber Rattlesnakes also control rodent populations, so a comeback will also help with Lyme disease cases in Massachusetts.
11. Do they swim? Can they escape and multiply by leaps and bounds into Petersham and Hardwick, etc.? Would they become inbred living in such a confined territory? If these concerns can be addressed and explained to people, then I see no reason for giving these wonderful, endangered critters a home. I'd hate to see them become extinct. I think people are so arrogant to think we're the only ones who have a right to live on this planet.
12. Putting the snakes anywhere in any state is going to have an effect on the eco system. They will be taking food from other animals and they are HIGHLY venomous. There are other animals that eat the same rodents that do not cause harm to humans or other animals. If you look at other animals or reptiles being re-introduced into an environment you will see that the end results are not good. They either end up putting other animals on the endangered list or causing more harm than good. The town of Leyden introduced wolverines into the woods to get rid of fisher cats and the

wolverines ended up killing pets and too many other animals and caused havoc to the town. They had to go out and kill the wolverines after introducing them. People need to leave nature alone they need to stop interfering with what is naturally there.

13. Speaking ecologically, all species need to be protected (even if they are not "glamorous" or seen as a pest). The Timber rattler is part of our ecosystem and needs to be protected from all the human invasions (like ATVs) for the sake of our future (which depends on the intricate web of ecology).
14. Isn't it possible for the snakes to move up to four miles?
15. I have field experience working on conservation of timber rattlesnakes in MA. The snakes are not at all likely to swim to the mainland. Any that do would either be killed by cars, predators or winter as they would have no place to hibernate.
16. Assuming that the timber rattlesnakes take hold on the Quabbin reservoir island how far will they spread within the next twenty years or so? Will they stay on the island for the most part, or will they venture farther out, possibly to outside the reservoir range? Also assuming they take hold, what does it mean for the other animals on the island, there will be more predators, so there will be more competition. Will that drive out the current snake populations? What does it mean for all the other animals on the island?
17. How will the endangered rattlesnakes be kept from eating other endangered species?

Timber Rattlesnake Habitat/Population

1. Why the continuing loss of dens and what are you doing about it?
2. Have there been any other new dens populated in other northern states with a similar climate? If so, have those dens survived and thrived?
3. Why would a rattlesnake colony be introduced to an area where they have never resided?
4. "5 dens are already here and 2 are in jeopardy." Why? What is wrong with the 5 dens we already have? Fungus?
5. I would like to know how many Timber Rattlesnakes are living in dens in MA. What is being done to kill the fungus that is making these Rattlesnakes dwindle?
6. Please describe in detail how surveys were conducted of populations in existing areas.
7. The Timber rattler has a widespread range throughout the Eastern United States. To discuss how these widespread populations and communities (other states' Fish and Wildlife teach to) coexist with the Timber per policies, wilderness skills, and lifestyles may help defray fear in the populace. It's the same snake, same venom, same habits, so Massachusetts is hardly forging new ground here.
8. I don't think Mass Wildlife has any idea of an accurate census and location of Timber Rattlesnakes. For example, how many Timber Rattlesnakes reside on East Mountain in Westfield through Holyoke or how many reside in Montgomery that have migrated off the Tekoa range?
9. I believe your census of Timber Rattlesnakes is inaccurate. For example, there are Timber Rattlesnakes on East Mountain in Westfield and Holyoke. Can you provide an accurate number on Tekoa Mountain? The number in Montgomery? How about repopulating existing dens versus experimenting with Mount Zion in the Quabbin Watershed?
10. If they are on the endangered list, how many does it take to get on that list and how exactly did you count the snakes?
11. I did not think these rattlesnakes were considered endangered as they are existing in areas of MA already. PA has a Timber rattlesnake hunting season, thus, certainly not endangered there. Why are they considered endangered in MA?
12. All the information that has been brought forward has been interesting and educational. I have attended 90% of the public meetings, the only unanswered question is how many rattlers make it an endangered species, and how efficient is the way they are being tracked. They cannot possibly all have chips in them for an accurate count.

13. Given the increasingly limited suitable habitat for timber rattlesnakes remaining in the Commonwealth and the continued threat to the fragmented, endangered population of the species posed by direct human-caused mortality, our Chapter believes this limited introduction program is a scientifically sound course of action.
14. In regards to the number of rattlesnakes in MA right now, what is the optimal number where the population should be? There must be a point at which the Division of Fisheries and Wildlife determined they're endangered?
15. I'm hearing we need to have more rattlesnakes, but you're not necessarily saying we need to ensure they are healthy and viable?
16. Hypothetically, if there were 500 snakes at each site, could Timber Rattlesnakes still be considered endangered? The project is being rephrased to move away from Mt. Zion. We would like evidence of how many snakes are run over, how many are killed etc. Also, what is the evidence that the population is being decimated?
17. What is the home range of a rattle snake?
18. Are you aware of Timber Rattlers in the Hudson/Marlboro/Stow/Acton area? If you were aware would you admit their presence? Why are you so afraid of people saying where they have seen them or taking photos and sharing their knowledge?
19. Have you actually surveyed how many rattlesnakes there are in Massachusetts? Please describe the survey completed by MA Fish and Wildlife regarding the location of The Timber Rattlesnake. A document showing the grid plan used in the survey, the names of the employees involved in the survey and the dates they did or did not discover timber rattle snakes in MA, and please let this search be up to date with in the past three years. I don't think there was any survey. I think this initiative is based on a false premise. The false premise is that rattlesnakes are endangered and that we need to boost their population. I think there are more rattlesnakes in MA than you know about, and I also think there are more that you do know about that you don't want us to know about.
20. If 200 rattlesnakes is not enough, how many rattlesnakes is enough? If they are reclusive, how can you be sure the current population is not much higher than reported? Are they endangered in other states?
21. How do we go about counting rattlesnakes that are in the state right now? You are claiming a population of 200 to 400. How was that accomplished? Are there suitable denning sites on Mt. Zion?
22. I do not believe that they need to be anywhere is this area to keep them from getting extinct. There are plenty. It's the thinking of snake obsession people that believe this. They are not extinct and do not feel we the Massachusetts people have to solve this so called problem. They are everywhere. Let them be.
23. Since there are large populations of timber rattlesnakes elsewhere in the U.S., why would Mass. spend large sums (or any) money to bolster our local snake populations?

Natural History/Life Cycle

1. By den site, what are the estimated or known current, annual losses from road kill, poaching, fungus, and related causes?

Alternative Sites

1. You previously reported that DFW has been putting neonates in Blue Hills den site(s). Is it working?
 - If it is working, why not more of the same?
 - If it is not working, what are the implications for populating another existing or new den site?
 - How many snakes are being headstarted? Are they all being returned to their populations of origin?

2. DCR has more than 14,000 acres of potential rattler habitat on public land with reportedly five active den sites (hibernacula) remaining.
 - How many other suitable den sites exist in our current public land?
 - How large do they have to be?
 - Are there suitable habitats on federal land in the Commonwealth?
 - What about those sites where extirpation (local extinction) has occurred; can any of them be recovered and repopulated?
3. Why do you need to place them in an area that has lots of hiking? They are all ready in other areas, take care of them there.
4. Would you be willing to introduce them to an area closer to where the "scientists" conducting this study reside? Why aren't you letting the public now there is a thriving colony in Blue Hills Reservation?
5. Why can't you just release these babies back into the 5 dens already present in MA?
6. Why not repopulate Maine and Rhode Island?
7. There are some locations, such as Mt. Tom, Holyoke, which have known rattlesnakes already. Why not pursue that location rather than arbitrarily choosing Mt. Zion? Wouldn't snakes do better where we know they can?
8. The science is overlooking the huge impact on thousands of people, and believe the science is more important than the common sense issues of relocating to an area that would impact less people – fisherman, loggers, hikers, bird watchers, joggers, picnickers.
9. Did Cobble Mountain in Granville, Mass come up as a possible new site for rattlesnakes? With tens of thousands of acres to roam and no public access, it would be ideal for them. There already exist up there.
10. I am a Massachusetts sportsman who believes that the protection and continued increase of the Timber Rattlesnake is important to the ecology of our woodlands. I understand I understand there has been serious opposition to the relocation at the Quabbin Reservoir. I would like to propose Tekoa Mountain in Woronoco Ma., known to locals as Rattlesnake Mountain. I remember my grandfather educating me on snakes and their natural habitat when I was younger. I am a native to the area, living in Huntington. There are not many who traverse the mountain due to its rugged terrain and location. It is very steep and rocky with few trails. The Southern face of the mountain is bordered by the railroad and the Westfield River.
11. Have the more isolated islands in Boston Harbor been considered for the rattlesnake colony? Are there any other locations currently under consideration? Would it make sense to introduce these snakes into the existing rattlesnake populations to help introduce genetic diversity?
12. Why aren't we enlarging the existing populations instead of looking for new locations aka Mt. Zion? Why aren't you releasing the ones now being breed in RI into known healthy dens that now exist instead of putting them in NEW locations, which will only be more of an experiment then protecting them for possibly more endangerment and unknown danger?
13. Put the snake at Mt. Tom, Holyoke, or Tekoa Mt. in Westfield. They are already there. The Quabbin is not the correct place for them.
14. Why do you care if rattlesnakes are extinct and why put in central ma where people that want to enjoy life live...put it in Boston if it must be in MA.
15. This species is thriving in Huntington/Russell /Westfield areas on public lands bordered by the Littleville and Knightville Dams and the Westfield River. Do the benefits of adding more to Quabbin outweigh the inherent risks?
16. The Quabbin & Mt. Tom are named as very specific locations for possible colonies. However, the third option in the articles I've read is simply "southern Berkshires." Where exactly in southern Berkshire county is being considered?

17. Why not put them in Boston Commons?
18. Massachusetts is the most populated state in New England, why would you want to reintroduce poisonous snakes here that could cause bodily harm or death to the populace? Wouldn't other remote and less populated regions of New England be more suitable for this experiment?
19. One of the worst types of snakes is rattlesnakes. Put them in another area. Like Capitol Hill.
20. I'm not sure why they're considering places that are frequented by hikers, when there is tons of space in the Berkshires where there are no trails. We go to Mt. Tom and the Quabbin, and are not fans of them being located at either place.
21. I can't seem to find reputable information on exactly where the snakes would be relocated on Mt Tom. I don't want to respond or voice my concerns based on unfounded fears. It seems, however, that Zion Island would have been a better relocation site than busy Mt Tom.
22. Would October Mountain State Forest be a suitable habitat for the Timber Rattlesnake? It is thousands of acres and has many undisturbed areas. We in the Berkshires have a great appreciation and respect for nature and wildlife. For those who like to go hiking in "nature", but like to complain about or are fearful of wild animals, snakes, bugs, etc., perhaps taking a walk in Boston Common is more appropriate for you. Please take whatever measures are necessary to help these endangered snakes.
23. Why would you want to put my grandchildren's life in danger for the sake of a few rattlesnakes when there are other places more appropriate, like "up in the timbers", not down in the water on an "island"?
24. My only suggestion would be if you want to put snakes in the Quabbin, you'd want to put them on an island isolated from shore, like Mt. Lizzie, Curtis Hill, Pomeroy, or Little Quabbin Hill, which are totally separated from the mainland by water.
25. As one young woman said "I grew up in Connecticut and there are rattlesnakes there and it is not a problem." So leave the rattlers in Connecticut... let that state do the conservation.

Conservation and Management

1. Couldn't similar measures (like the HCP for Piping Plovers) be applied and a Habitat Conservation Plan be developed at one or more of the five remaining hibernacula for Timber rattlesnakes, particularly at dens in jeopardy?
 - Do we let the rattlesnakes die off where they have existed for centuries while we conduct a 10 year experiment of uncertain outcome? Or, with the Piping Plover example, should we aggressively implement our own management recommendations for both Timber rattlesnakes and Copperheads?
2. What are the lessons learned and being learned from other regional states where these snakes are also classified as "endangered? How have other states protected existing dens for the survival of these snakes?
3. Can you provide a case study, preferably more than one, where this has been done elsewhere? I'd very much like to hear about the success/disappointments/surprises that were encountered by account of the state and the affected community residents.
4. The North Worcester County Quabbin Anglers and the Quabbin Fishermen became essential partners with DCR and MWRA to prevent the introduction of zebra mussels into the Quabbin Reservoir after they were first discovered in the waters of the Berkshires. How can other environmental, governmental, and local associations and agencies assist in the protection and survival of these endangered species of snakes (including copperheads) where they now exist?
5. There is a legislative mandate to protect endangered species. But a state line is man-made. If there are so many of these snakes in PA (enough to have a hunting season), why is it important, aside from the state line concern, to protect them in MA? They are not truly endangered, right?

6. I think we need to save the Timber rattlesnake from extinction. Relocation of the snakes with monitoring to Mt. Zion is a good idea. It's one of the more remote locations in MA. I think fear of snakes, in general, has caused alarm by the public on this issue. Snakes were here before us. Because the demise of the species is man-made, it's our duty to do everything in our power to save the species.
7. Timber Rattlesnakes are native to Massachusetts. There's no reason that this project should be held back. Especially with depleting populations in the Blue Hills.
8. WHY are we trying to save the rattlesnake? WHAT BENEFIT is there in preserving the rattlesnake? If I were to encounter a rattlesnake, can I protect myself from this "endangered species"?
9. Why after so many years did this need to insure for the protection and further development of the Timber Rattlesnake become of such vital importance? Everything in life has a purpose even scientifically so what brought this to light if over the last two hundred years the populations have been dwindling. Whether from poachers or due to disease generally everything has a purpose so can you explain what it is that the Timber Rattlesnake will add to nature if the project should move forward in a phased in approach or not?
10. I understand that the snakes are endangered but why are they endangered??? Because of the threat that they are....snake in the grass!!!!
11. Has anyone contacted NSF to apply for a grant to see if they could get funding to set up an aquarium to house these snakes? That would make the most sense. They do not need to live in the wild, they would be perfectly content in a large aquarium with rocks and what have you.
12. Why are the state fish and wildlife officials even pursuing this after finding out that the so called fungus that they thought was prevalent and may have been destroying them was found not to be true? Seems to me that things go extinct for many reasons. We sure have a better way to keep them alive such as protected environments like zoos or similar scenarios and places. Why not realize that when placed back into places such as the Quabbin there are natural predators which will slowly over time eradicate the snakes such as Bald Eagles that feed on mice and snakes! There is a reason that things go extinct, it's called natural and nature!
13. I also hope that the genetics of the Mt. Tom Timber Rattlesnake population will, if possible, be able to be preserved through captive-breeding, for eventual release either back on Mt. Tom, or Mt. Zion, or in other locations. Thanks for your help.
14. Timber rattlesnakes are now facing a new threat of Snake Fungal Disease, an emerging disease known to reduce health and potentially cause mortality in this species, as well as other snake species. Introduction of captive bred disease free timber rattlesnakes to Mount Zion has the added benefit of keeping a healthy stock of snakes isolated from potential carriers of Snake Fungal Disease on the mainland. We believe MassWildlife, in designating as the introduction site an island with no legal public access, has appropriately balanced the conservation needs of the species with the need to minimize the already negligible risk to the general public.
15. If this is a grant for money because the rattlesnake is rare, let it be. They are not needed, maybe a zoo.
16. If nature's way is to evolve and adapt and the numbers have gone down in recent years, is it really safe and responsible to try to force reintroduction of this species to an environment that for whatever reason does not naturally have the abilities to support them?
17. Is it possible to implement these management recommendations that have already been outlined? It sounds like you already have the authority to do that, and it wouldn't cost a lot of money.
18. The fungus is real. We should be looking at putting this money toward solving that for the snakes. There will also be a loss of access to the Quabbin. I'm not okay with my tax dollars going towards this project. We should invest in the existing dens, help those snakes survive, and focus on the fungus.

19. Have there been a lot of successful den establishments? Has this been tried with other species, venomous or not. If there were a successful population established, is this something climate change would affect individual populations (phenology, growing season days, etc)? Are we fighting a long term battle, or is this a losing cause? Have there been thoughts about bolstering existing populations where road kill may not be an issue?
20. Since the climate of Mass. is not favorable for this species and the chance of success is probably only 50% or less, why is it desirable to use our resources to encourage timber rattlesnakes that are plentiful elsewhere because they are in suitable environments elsewhere?

Safety Concerns

1. In the event that proper studies, and what The People want, show the snakes should in fact go to the Quabbin, we believe anything short of clear Legislative action to guarantee future generations of PEOPLE will not be displaced, by future administrative regulations or other such reasons, is required so that eventually the protected snakes are not the only ones to enjoy Quabbin.
2. Why would you want to increase the risks to our children, as they play on our property, and on the surrounding land? Why is it that the human citizens, families, and children of Western Massachusetts are not cared about, and that you are willing to increase the risk to us?
3. How often do people get bitten by them? How well stocked are our regional medical centers with antidote?
 - I heard a story on NPR a few years ago about how difficult it is to find antidote in medical centers. If that story is true, and even if the possibility of someone getting bit is miniscule, it may make reintroduction more acceptable if there was a plan to get antidote to all the regions medical centers and a plan to get them fresh antidotes if they expire.
4. The primary negativity in the community relates to Timbers escaping and poisoning those using the Quabbin. To diffuse even irrational fear, perhaps a docent attendant could be available on Zion keeping an eye on the toilets, electronically monitor the location of the releases, and sensitize those using the area. The more average Joes and Jills buffering between the academics and the public, the quicker the embrace by the public. People do not trust authority. Citizen naturalists, especially retired folks not needing competitive pay scales could make this the least expensive opportunity to secure safety for the Timbers.
5. It is just being reported the blasé way DCR employees feel about snakes that leave the Blue Hills Reservation and make their way to homes near and far from their location. It was reported that a person found a rattlesnake on their front steps in Quincy and DCR shrugged it off as "oh local people know about this and just call us and we come and pick them up". That is terrifying to me.
6. If they are brought to the Quabbin, they will eventually swim to shores. Over time, there will be some human contacts, and, without doubt, someone will be bitten. What can they do to protect the public? My concern is they will close off the Quabbin to protect the people, all because they want to protect the snakes.
 - They claim the snakes will not leave the island, but over a period of time we know some will swim to the mainland, where they will eventually encounter humans.
7. If someone is bitten by one of these rattlesnakes, how will they be able to reach medical assistance immediately? There is no cell service in the area around the Quabbin. Will there be anti-venom available close by? The Town of Petersham has no pharmacy and the closest one would be Athol or Barre. As I have learned, the venom from this particular snake is extremely deadly and any delay in receiving medical help will result in certain death.
8. Is there a study yet on the value of one human life damaged or lost so a deadly reptile can have a new home far away from the important political hacks in Boston?

9. Why do you even want to introduce a deadly, venomous snake to an area that does not currently have any reptiles that can cause such harm to humans?
10. How will you prevent the rattlesnakes from migrating onto private property? Many homeowners in the area have animals - horses, cows, alpacas, dogs, etc.?
11. Will that snake fungus get into Boston's water supply?
12. Who can we sue if we get bit off of Mt. Zion?
13. What is being done to protect the People?
14. Hunters kill deer because they need to protect the watershed forest. If a hunter gets bit and dies, will they now send out people with antivenin to save the hunters who saved the forest that saved Quabbin forest that purifies the water? Or save the snake and kill the forest?
15. How would you like to bring your family/wife, sons, daughters, grandkids to an area where this dangerous situation exists, where no help could be made once bitten by a snake?
16. Now you are proposing to put them on Mount Tom where they can come into several surrounding cities and towns! Do you remember why people wanted them eradicated? Rattlesnakes kill people!
17. The plan is about protecting the snakes. What about protecting people from the snakes? Why do something that increases danger and fear in people? A woman was bitten by a poisonous snake (copperhead or rattlesnake?) a few years ago in Easthampton. She was bitten in her yard! How do those who want more snakes keep them from wandering out of their expected range?
18. As a resident who often hikes the trails with my family, this is a serious safety hazard.
19. If a snake bite occurs, will be available at all local hospitals? Does the antivenin have a shelf life? What is the cost? Who pays (i.e. State, victim, or town) if the person has no insurance? How will the victim be transported off site? Will Quabbin personnel be trained how to respond? Will they be able to administer the antivenin?
20. Also, what emergency measures and safety measures are being considered if someone gets bitten in the Quabbin? What is the closest hospital? Who will have anti-venom? How can someone call for help if they are fishing or in a boat (these snakes do swim)?
21. Why aren't the citizens and taxpayers who live near and around the Quabbin being given consideration of their opinions? Certainly a human life is more important than a rattlesnake life as these snakes can certainly cause death to someone in that area due to hiking, wooded walks, fishing and shore fishing and a lot of farming done in these areas. It is NOT like Boston where people hike and run and walk on concrete sidewalks where Timbers do not really come out to...a hidden snake in the woods around the Quabbin can strike an innocent human life.
22. We've been told that the area in question (Mt. Zion) is an ideal location for Timber rattlesnakes and that the danger to people would be mitigated by warning signs, however rattlesnakes can and will move from this area looking for a food source or mating and signs won't prevent them from doing so.
23. Scientific data exists which clearly show the snakes bite and can cause death from their bites. Scientific data also shows anti-venom is needed, yet, none is available in the surrounding area of the Quabbin as is available in several Boston hospitals. There is substantial data which shows deaths caused by Timber rattlesnakes. Pets can also be bitten and death can occur.
24. There are discrepancies in the scientific data and the dangers to the human population in the area.
25. Yes, how can the state guarantee the safety of residents who frequent the Quabbin and reside in the surrounding towns? These are venomous, dangerous snakes. We all know animals can reproduce quickly and adapt to their environment. The snakes will likely learn how to swim off the island and further migrate into other areas of the Quabbin. If one adult or child resident of this commonwealth is killed by one of these vipers, their death is on the hands of the state of Massachusetts. Who is more important here the snakes or our people who wish to enjoy the Quabbin?

26. Do the area hospitals have the anti-venom in case of a snake bite? Berkshire Medical Center does carry the anti-venom in its formulary in case of a snake bite.
27. Why would you intentionally increase the amount of a deadly snake in an area where families with children and pets come to recreate?
28. My only concern regards the proposed alternate location for the snakes being Mt. Tom in Holyoke, MA. I have no objections to the island in the Quabbin; however, Mt. Tom has a very active public hiking trail, the Metacomet-Monadnock trail - a trail I hike frequently. Along the western facing side, especially, there are many rocky faces and ledges which I have also been climbing for years. These western facing rocks provide a very warm, sunny location for potential snakes, and I am concerned that any increase in rattlesnake population on this mountain may result in a significant likelihood that reaching up over one's head to secure a hand-hold on the next rock up may have unfortunate results with a snake sunning itself on that ledge. I would prefer that the snakes be placed in an area with not such heavy foot and recreation travel, I believe it is inviting tragedy and potential legal/liability issues for the state.
29. Why on God's Green earth would you want to bring more potentially dangerous snakes to Mt. Tom which is essentially an urban wilderness which enjoys multiple uses by a large contiguous human population? If any place is feasible it is the Quabbin where the isolation factor is greater and hence the safety. Yes fishermen will complain....but is Mt. Tom which already has a population of the snakes a logical choice given its high recreational use?
30. I think it would be a mistake to put the snakes on Mt. Tom cuz a lot of people go there to hike and they want to have picnic there with a lot of children. Please put the snakes somewhere else, cuz they do not belong here.
31. I don't think enough consideration has been made for the safety of all those families with children and dogs that hike Mt Tom. Every weekend Mt Tom is filled with people hiking and picnicking. Kids and Dogs run along the trail and often off the trail to investigate and enjoy nature. Having Rattlesnakes there is not a good idea.
32. No one wants them in their backyard. Who's going to pay the medical bills when a child gets bit?
33. I have been a nurse for 40 yrs. and have an interest in public safety. I can tell you with honesty and certainty that none of the surrounding community hospitals have the antivenin in their pharmacies should a person have the ill fate of being bitten by a rattler. Rattlesnakes do not belong where people can and will run into them. You can bet that there will be the thrill seekers and then just everyday people, like the old lady, who will encounter them just being there yard.
34. Can we sue the state if someone gets bit and lives? Are you giving local hospitals the antivenin?
35. Most importantly if one of these snakes bites or kills one person or one child, who will be held responsible?
36. Have you thought about how many people, children at that go to Mt. Tom?? I mean there's a PARK there for CHILDREN!!
37. It is not clear how reintroducing a venomous snake into a human populated area will benefit children, families, hikers, bikers, campers in the Mount Tom/Holyoke/Chicopee/South Hadley/Easthampton/Northampton/Westhampton/Belchertown area, combined population being 162,486, and let's not forget Springfield, population 153,060 which totals 315,546 PEOPLE.
38. What if one of the hunters dies from getting bitten...would an antivenin in time... or for that matter what about all the hikers and birdwatchers and people who walk into Quabbin to fish from various areas....what about the many people that now use the Windsor dam area to picnic and walkwhen these snakes leave this peninsula ...all the good intentions and all the science behind those who support this agenda cannot and will not stop the interaction between these deadly snakes and people.

39. Please don't breed rattlesnakes on a popular hiking spot like Mt. Tom. Someone is going to get seriously hurt.
40. Is there a plan in place with the local health officials and/or area hospitals should a person be bitten by a rattler? Antivenin is rare and costly. Should the snakes be placed at Zion, the small community hospital would not have the antivenin on hand.
41. As a public health professional and resident of Easthampton, I am appalled at the suggestion that poisonous snakes would be intentionally relocated to a popular recreation area. While I support wildlife conservation efforts generally, common sense dictates that it would be ill-advised (at best) to base this program at Mt. Tom. I look forward to supporting this program once it identifies an appropriate location that does not needlessly put families--and the community more broadly--at risk.
42. I am concerned that breeding rattlesnakes on Mount Tom may scare people away from the mountain as recreation and from the town or Easthampton as a place to live. One of the biggest draws for me to Easthampton is the proximity to the hiking at Mount Tom. If the mountain was used to as a breeding ground for snakes, I would no longer feel safe hiking there, and may possibly even leave town. I believe it may scare others away from town as well.
43. I think this would be a terrible thing to do to Mt. Tom, and would make hikers far less safe, especially children. Please do not go forward with this plan.
44. My brother-in-law and niece's husband are both doctors who regularly work in emergency rooms. Their experience with rattlesnakes has included what they referred to as "dry bites" when a rattlesnake would bite but no venom was injected. It would be interesting to see if a database of rattlesnake bites could be analyzed to see exactly what the most common outcomes are from those bites. It was obvious (from a recent trip to Alabama) that people living in places where venomous snakes are common do not avoid going outdoors and enjoying outdoor recreation because of the presence of snakes.
45. Hospitals, I hope, are prepared for a bite and the public should know where they are, but children do not read.
46. I am a veterinarian and physician who worked in federal and state government, academia and private practice on diseases transmitted from animals to humans. In the extremely unlikely event of a person or domestic animal being bitten, a safe and effective anti-venom is available within reasonable distance.
47. Are the rattlesnakes that are in question poisonous? If so, what would be a protocol that is put in place in case these dangerous snakes multiply and make their way closer to our homes?
48. How close to residents will snakes be on Mt. Zion compared to Mt. Tom in Holyoke?
49. Do local hospitals stock anti-venom, and what is the cost? How will my life be better with more rattlesnakes?
50. I've become very familiar with the Timber Rattlesnake over the past year as I've gobbled up every bit of information that I could find on them. What I've found is an animal that you would be very hard pressed to ever locate in the wild. To say these animals are reclusive, docile, and highly unlikely to bite people is an understatement. That's what this debate is really about. It's about public safety. If thousands of visitors to the Blue Hills near Boston are walking around a population of these snakes with no one getting bit, how are we at any risk from a smaller population being introduced to an area off limits to people?
51. Is the CroFab Anti-venom something that all hospitals in Massachusetts have available?
52. How come Mr. French said he could not remember anyone being bitten by a rattlesnake in Massachusetts, but an article I just read had him quoted in about a photographer he was with that was studying the rattlesnakes was bitten while with him.

53. I like walking through the woods and not worrying that every log and every wall might have a hidden surprise with fangs that might bite me or my dog. I do not want to live in fear here in Massachusetts because of rattlesnakes like they do down south just so a select few can have a fun project to work on. We don't need rattlesnakes in the state; we got rid of them for a reason.
54. I'm crawling around hiking, fishing, off-roading, and I don't want to be crawling around and worried about getting bit by a snake when I'm nowhere near society. You're miles away from anything if something happens. This is all because we felt it's necessary to reintroduce a species that we got rid of for a very good reason. They are dangerous. They are poisonous. Would you let your kids have poisonous snakes? Probably not.
55. How many people really use the recreational areas across the state? I don't think you'd really have any way of tracking, but we have seen a lot more people of late using these areas. If you really want to accomplish your mission to protect these snakes, they should be kept separate from the people.
56. Should we take snake bite kits when go hiking and camping? Who is going to instruct us in the use of these kits? There's no antivenin at the hospitals? I can't believe it. You want to increase the snakes at all of these recreational areas which doesn't make any sense. Mt. Tom and the Quabbin have too much foot traffic. The public hasn't been sufficiently educated on this.
57. They are not an animal to be feared. They are far less dangerous than deer are to automobile accidents. Considering the modern medicine that we have now, the medical personnel work very well, and the new anti-venom is very affective. It is extremely rare for people to have a severe adverse reaction to these animals if on the rare chance that they are bitten. We haven't had an accidental bite in the last 60 years in Massachusetts. There really is no sound science that shows that we need to be this fearful of this species.
58. So you want to put these snakes in areas where people hike, where families hike, where people bring pets? This is a problem because they bite. Someone told us there is no medicine at the hospitals. Dogs don't know the difference between a snake; dogs are curious. They're going to get bit. Snakes bite people. We put dogs down that bite people. You people want to save all of these snakes?
59. We are in a very safe corner of the globe. We have these small snakes that pose no threats to us. They are not out to get us. They don't want to eat us for dinner. We owe it to them to protect them.
60. I am a local emergency room physician and have been here for 27 years. I was trained in California, and I've worked at Indian reservations in Montana and California where there were large rattlesnake populations. I've never a problem with rattlesnake bites, and I've never had to administer any anti-venom. We are more than capable of handling that locally. All of the emergency room physicians are Board certified, and we are all trained in snake bites and snake bite management. You have more of a risk from tick bites than stepping on a snake, or encountering a rabid raccoon or fox than a rattlesnake.
61. I live in the eastern part of the state where the water comes from the Quabbin reservoir; we trust that source. The water comes through open and closed aqueducts. The aqueduct opens up just like a stream. These rattlesnakes can swim. If there's a storm, a surge of water, or if a filtration screen on the aqueduct is broken, the snakes can climb right up and come through the pipes. I think putting them in the Quabbin is putting them on the highway called the aqueduct.
62. We need these rattlesnakes as part of the diversity. I did some research and found that you're 20 times more likely to be killed by bees or wasps than you are by rattlesnakes. In America, you are three times more likely to be killed by a cow than by all poisonous snakes combined. So we need to teach our children to be careful and respectful, but not to be afraid.
63. Mt. Tom is very rocky and there are a lot of hikers there. It's pretty hard to say you wouldn't run into one with all the rock that they'd love to stay in, and it's a far cry from putting them on an island at

the Quabbin. There are people who live down the bottom at the foot of the hill and the snakes could come right down. What about the offspring? So that creates even more rattlesnakes.

64. Rattlesnakes swim also and will make their way to Swift River and will not be safe for fishermen and swimmers. How can you be guaranteed that someone won't be bitten or lose their life from them?
65. I am a native of Massachusetts, but for 20 years lived throughout the western United States, working as a professional wildlife biologist. I spent a lot of time outdoors – hiking, camping, working – and ended up seeing a number of snakes. Once I learned something about them, I never felt threatened, and actually looked forward to seeing one on occasion, as this was a relatively rare and special event, even though rattlesnakes are abundant there. Rattlesnakes use poison to subdue prey, not to attack people. It is physiologically expensive for them to produce this poison, so they will only use it to procure food, or if threatened. They would much rather avoid us altogether. Having a small population of timber rattlesnakes on Mt. Zion is a risk that can be managed if people understand the situation and these animals. We all know that the drive to the Quabbin is thousands of times more risky than getting bitten once you are there. In fact, we are all more likely to be killed by a toaster at home than a poisonous snake in the woods.

Program Logistics

1. The grant makes no mention of Zion. Finding ways to protect Northern Timber Rattlesnakes, where they currently exist, and find a cure/solution to their fungal disease problem is the stated purpose of the grant, and that could, and we believe SHOULD be the focus of your efforts. Any efforts to use State and Federal funds to repopulate poisonous ANYWHERE, or EVERYWHERE, they existed hundreds of years ago all over the Commonwealth of Massachusetts should have extensive input from The People who live with the effects of having a colony of poisonous snakes nearby.
2. Can we get some specifics on the Zion project?
 - Have you found the hibernaculum to be used with this project? If not, how do you intend to locate it?
 - Can you provide us with Google Earth or similar overhead view of the site to include vegetation and overhead cover?
 - Can you provide us with a topographical map with concentric circles around the site at distances of 4.5 and 9 miles?
 - Can you provide us the project/plan details: timelines, resources, manpower, etc.? How many trees and acreage needs to be cleared for sunlight to provide resistance to the Emerging Fungal Skin Disease?
3. Are you using new, inexpensive technology like trail cameras and drones?
4. Having a statewide agenda for the re-introduction in the 5 existing habitats is a fine long term project that should not be introduced at this time because it will involve too much of our population to oppose and therefore put the Mt. Zion project much further down the road.
5. There needs to be an emphasis on why this step (Quabbin) is necessary and that you will be well prepared to debunk scary stories all over the internet and educate people who are genuinely frightened.
6. I continue to hear that the snakes are being placed on an island. Isn't this not a true island? Does it attach to other land via a dirt road that is closed off to humans, but would not prohibit the snakes from traveling off the island?
7. Why does the plan misrepresent the location as an island when it is not?
8. What was the method used to pick the experts you paid to tell you what you already decided?
9. It has been said that the initial colony will be outfitted with tracking devices. How will you know where their offspring are headed?

10. My big concern is that the snakes will not agree to be confined to the designated area, and that they will begin to show up in residential areas and cause problems. I have several types of harmless snakes in my area and I'm fine with that, but I'm not sure I could ID or deal with a rattlesnake. What steps will be taken to make sure they stay where the conservation plan puts them?
11. Were the parents of these baby snakes clear of the fungus that has plagued the snake population?
12. Reintroduction of a species to the state should resemble what was done with turkeys. This is not what is being proposed for the rattlesnake. To put them in one place makes no sense.
13. Any reason why 5 snake colonies aren't enough?
14. Do the new snakes have that fungus? What den did the baby snakes come from?
15. Were the snakes in the area or are you just hoping the new snakes like it there?
16. What guarantee be the snakes will stay there?
17. How often do you plan to monitor their whereabouts? Who can see those reports?
18. Repopulating rattlesnakes was not a good idea in the first place. Placing them on an "island" connected with a land bridge to surrounding towns in Quabbin Reservoir was an even worse idea.
19. My understanding is that the location for the reintroduction of the rattlesnakes is not really an island but is connected to the mainland by a baffle dam. Is this true?
20. I don't believe that these snakes will be contained on the island. They will adapt and learn how to swim off the island. They will be highly motivated to hunt more prey off the island and settle in other areas of the Quabbin.
21. Why are you calling location an island? It is called a peninsula when it is attached to land and there is a road leading to it. Stupid idea. Keep snakes away from Quabbin and let us enjoy life!
22. There is no scientific evidence/guarantee the snakes will build a den there. How can you be sure those snakes will want to make a den there? They may spread that NOSE fungus to other creatures there. Is that a possibility? What guarantee is there that the snake fungus won't attack there too? Is that den going to get infected with that nose fungus also?
23. I would like to know how many snakes they consider putting out there. Reason being Mount Tom might not be the place with how much traffic it gets from hikers. A small amount in that area and some in others would be perfect. They were here before humans they should not go extinct we need to learn to coexist. I am afraid of snakes, but would not kill one; I would go in the opposite direction, the same if I saw a bear.
24. The reason people are so against this proposal is because we go there often enough to know that this area is not I repeat. Not an island ... these snakes over time will have to leave this peninsula.
25. The proposed Quabbin site "IS NOT AN ISLAND!" Those snakes will travel & NOT stay in area they will be dumped in.
26. The "global" process of looking at all Timber rattlesnake populations in Massachusetts and formulating plans for each is definitely the best way to proceed.
27. Please do not let them come back to the woods. Even on an island, they can swim, or a drought, can make them get to the main land.
28. Is MassWildlife proposing to look at the five existing sites, choose one site, and start a repopulation of that one site?
29. Would the state need a permit or approval from any Federal agency to stock the state with rattlesnakes?
30. The Rattlesnake Conservation Plan is not found online. Where is it?
31. What scientific studies have been performed to suggest that there is enough habitat and prey to support the proposed number of snakes to be introduced on Mt. Tom? Where are those data? Will you make those reports and the data made available for public scrutiny and comment?
32. What alternatives of the proposed action does the plan evaluate? These should be 1) introduction of the snakes 2) protect/enhance existing habitat - no introduction; 3) no action.

33. Does the plan evaluate potential effects on the human environment?
34. Since the Fisheries and Wildlife Board will ultimately make the final decision on the Rattlesnake Conservation Plan, what metric from the public comment/opinion will the Fisheries and Wildlife Board be using when determining the final decision of the Rattlesnake Conservation Plan? How will the residents know their voice is heard if you can't give them a metric of how much weight their opinion has the final decision made by the Fisheries and Wildlife Board?
35. They will not stay on the island, and we are naïve to think otherwise. Even though they will have transmitters, their offspring will not. There is also a chance that if the state has success in the Quabbin, that they will seek other areas to introduce these poisonous reptiles as they have done twice in the past without permission.
36. What if that program gets canceled two years down the road? And all of a sudden all of these snakes are just loose; nobody's tracking them, nobody's capturing them, nobody's relocating them.
37. My biggest concern is when they say they'll be put on an island, it's not really an island, it's actually a causeway. If they're on a causeway, they can move around. What will keep them in their prospective spots?
38. My only concern is every time I hear about placing rattlesnakes in the Quabbin, it's displayed as being put on an island. It is not an island. There is a baffle dam made of rock going to a second island, and a second baffle dam going back to the mainland, which is a total distance of about ¼ mile. The habitats they like are rocky places to crawl into the rocks, and the baffle dams are constructed of rocks. I assume that would make a good den on a cold winter day when those rocks heat up from the sunlight. So the snakes would be more than happy to be in the baffle dam.
39. There are 440,000 square acres of property owned by the state of MA. Why would you even consider putting them in an area where we're trying to promote people to come and enjoy these spaces? Anything you read on relocating snakes, the mortality rate is in the 70th percentile or somewhere around there. It's just not the best process. Put the snakes in an area away from the population and you will have a much better chance.
40. How can you be so sure the rattlesnakes will remain on the island?

Economic & Funding Concerns

1. As I understand it, the original grant (spending a total of \$747,423.00 from all sources, and \$159,966.00 from combined Massachusetts funds) with a time extension, goes until spring of 2018. With a huge Massachusetts budget shortfall, pay raises for legislatures, but not much for Senior Citizens, about a \$20,000,000,000 Federal Deficit: A. is this the best way to spend "our" money, (It's ALL The People's money and B. What is the hurry?
2. How many small restaurants and stores, and those people they employ, depend on tens of thousands of tourists that come here to Quabbin every year?
3. Discuss funding; cost to taxpayers? In Feb 2016 Gov Baker said regarding the Zion plan, a few hundred thousand dollars is fairly short money and is important for preserving indigenous species.
 - Since there is no existing or pending federal grant, and there is no reliance on state budgetary funds, where are the monies coming from to support the project?
 - \$1M budget deficit in 2017? Is \$200K for rattlers still OK (trade off)?
 - DFW announced the Zion project as a 10 year plan. Can we get a complete layout of funding: monies expended to date and source(s), and detailed costs for the future (for both DFW and DCR)?
4. If repopulating dens is one of a number of alternatives for survival of Timber rattlesnakes (as is now being done with Blue Hills), it would be important to know cost. Can we estimate the cost per snake from capture of gravid female to eventual release at a hibernaculum, with and without a

transmitter? With this information, the group could better understand “how much is enough or affordable” as it addresses alternatives.

5. Where has ALL the money gone?
6. Who or what is paying for this project? How much is this costing?
7. How much is being spent on protection/security of current sites? Have you asked for any more money resources? If not, why not?
8. If the grant for this project states to continue in areas already existing for Timber rattlesnakes, why is the Quabbin being considered as this is a NEW area not an existing one? Wouldn't the grant monies be illegally obtained if a new area is being considered?
9. Please let us know why more money is not put into killing the fungus that is killing Timber Rattlers instead of money to raise and relocate them.
10. Why are we spending our tax dollars on snakes instead of providing shelter for our homeless veterans? They are also endangered.
11. In my view, an ill-conceived plan and waste of taxpayer dollars. We have roads crumbling and failing to be maintained across the state - in spite of a gasoline tax that is earmarked for this very purpose. The Massachusetts Turnpike is in the worst shape that I can remember. We have better roads within the Quabbin Watershed than the state highways and local roadways.
12. Did the NHES Advisory Committee and the Fish and Wildlife Board approve a 5-10 year project without a detail budget and plan, and a without a known funding source?
13. The Governor said the project was worth "a few hundred thousand dollars." Where was the money coming from and to buy what (budget)? Separately we heard the figure was \$200,000.
14. OE&EA says funding will be with federal grants, but no grants are pending. And, the state last we heard has a \$1M budget shortfall. What is the funding source, and if it is state budgetary funds, what's the trade-off?
15. It's been three years since the proposal was given to DCR. Are we wrestling now with a project that still has no budget and no definitive funding source?
16. Will it cost taxpayers money?
17. I don't care about the Plan, this is a complete waste of time and money. What benefit do the taxpayers gain by doing this??? Aren't Republicans in charge now?
18. If funds run out...which agencies have faced...monitoring them will also not happen which those who support this agenda use as an excuse to also calm public outcry... if and when these snakes get further onto other areas of Quabbin what would the further plans be and what would the cost be...what areas of work and recreation would be impacted and what further cost would this lead to...currently the many changes that have been implemented due to the boat washing program have had financial impact on local businesses all around Quabbin...when fisherman recreate there ...then local economy is positively impacted...if this issue is pursued ...how do local store owners feel about this further impacting them... I have talked with many of them. So I can tell you..they have already been severely impacted by the number of people that already have declined by the changes made in the past 10 years ... years ago...the saplings were being eaten by the deer herd at Quabbin.. The hunters were allowed to hunt Quabbin which helped to control the deer herd.
19. An indirect effect would be on the economics of the City because people would be deterred from utilizing recreational resources at Mt. Tom due to the introduction of more rattle snakes. Please explain how the State will evaluate the environmental injustice upon the City of Holyoke and their action of stocking rattle snakes on Mt. Tom on Holyoke and surrounding communities.
20. At any point during the development, research, and propagation of the rattle snakes has the State received on Federal funds?
21. My question goes back to the Athol meeting when Mr. Hammock asked the Chairman when the rattlesnake grant money had to be spent by, and he said it's all gone. I confronted Mr. Chairman in

Belchertown about that and he said, "Oh, I didn't say that." I said, "Well I have it on CD." Mr. Chairman said, "Oh, well that's for fungus. It was only a half million." I told him it was a half million federal grant and a half million matching state grant. I told him I'd like to see the accounting of that. Mr. Chairman said that wasn't a problem as it is a public document. I never saw the documents.

22. You extorted \$150,000 out of Holyoke Gas and Electric to put up a tower. In order for them to get a permit, you forced them to spend all kinds of money to put transmitters on snakes. They're populating the mountain with snakes, and you want to put more snakes on Mt. Tom?
23. Why were grant funds obtained for the study of the rattlesnake nose fungus being used to breed and establish a new colony in the Quabbin on an island that is no longer an island, AND to pay for one or more parties?

Access & Enforcement Concerns

1. How are you controlling public access?
2. Disturbing or killing these snakes has been a criminal offense since 1979. Are the enforcement and penalties severe enough to discourage violations?
3. I know that a problem other places like the Blue Hills have is that it is a public place and people kill the snakes.
4. The scenario is uncontrollable overtime – funds can be cut to this Dept. So control will be lost and danger is leading to a no-access issue.
5. Will the new areas be made safe from the public or will the public be banned for areas to keep Timber rattlers safe?
6. Would I be subject to arrest and fines for "disturbing" the poor helpless rattlesnake? I live by the Quabbin. If the snakes show up in my backyard, I am supposed to just leave them alone, give them space? No way. I would protect my family, and I do not want to be subjected to any legal entanglements as a result of that.
7. If the public and workers are ever bitten in the future then the access to this area will be put into question whether this is voluntary or which I believe will be access limited further because protection will be enforced due to the protected status of the snake.
8. My biggest concern is that the snakes will be in danger from people, not the other way around. Ignorance regarding the benefit and importance of certain types of wildlife (large predators like wolves and mountain lions, snakes and others) is, unfortunately great. I worry that the efforts of the RCP would be undone by individuals attempting to harm the snakes after they are placed on Mt. Zion Island. Are there any plans for increased policing of the sites where the reintroductions are planned to prevent harm coming to the snakes in their dens?
9. We have many worries that come with protecting the rattlesnakes, one being limiting public access. How much space has to be limited to Mt. Zion?
10. What are the penalties if someone kills a snake? Show us some statistics.
11. Is there any discussion on increasing law enforcement to patrol the affected areas to ensure the safety of the snakes?
12. Someone in the audience at the last meeting told me that they like to hike on Mt. Zion. But once you put the rattlesnakes out there, they wouldn't be allowed to go out there because the rattlesnakes have to be protected. Not the people, the rattlesnakes have to be protected!

Public Outreach

1. Please post Tom French's video on YouTube, a very excellent resource that will answer most people's concerns.
2. Consider posting the excerpt from the Hartford Courant: "The primary diet of the Timber rattlesnake is mice that contain ticks. It is estimated that each snake eliminates 2,500 to 4,500 ticks per year."

Lyme disease generated by an infected tick is much more prevalent in recent years and it attributed to the decline of the Timber rattlesnake.”

3. The website will generate fears and opinions by people that are unscientific and useless for the project to go forward. If you must create a website, keep it to certain agenda topics with a comment section.
4. I think all of my questions have been answered at one point or another. It would be nice if there was a bulleted “facts” sheet listing biological need, how new populations would be more economical than the other alternatives, etc. Also some reliable information of how common it is for one of these snakes to bite a person.
5. Have you put enough effort into educating the people that rattlesnakes cannot swim or move on ice if the water is frozen? I heard that the fishermen are ridiculously afraid the snakes are going to attack them in their boats.
6. The executive summary appears to be the only description of the plan available online. As such it offers no information about the reported desire to establish a population of Timber Rattlesnakes on Mt Zion in the Quabbin. A previous webpage with more information (<http://www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/dfg/dfw/natural-heritage/species-information-and-conservation/rare-reptiles-and-amphibians/endangered-rattlesnake-conservation.html>) was taken down after 2/7/17. This page provided some details about the plan, but lacked specifics about the plan. Why was the page removed? What are your plans to provide a detailed online description of the Rattlesnake Conservation Plan?
7. My concern is more on public outreach. Is there a press release, or informational poster, located somewhere for those who want to be informed but could not attend the sessions.
8. I thoroughly approve of the Rattlesnake Conservation Plan and the proposal to locate a small population of snakes on an island within Quabbin Reservoir. My question is: How do we overcome the uncalled-for unenlightened resistance of state officials like Ann Gobi? Can (and should) proponents of the conservation plan attempt a signature campaign or try to get a referendum on the ballot? The statewide referendum concerning humane treatment of farm animals would seem to indicate that a large number of voters are sensitive to animal rights issues. If this referendum is accompanied by a targeted campaign to inform MA residents of how acute the danger of extinction the rattlesnake population is and how small the likelihood of the relocation efforts are to affecting citizens, then you may stand a chance. I bet you could enlist volunteers to help with this effort.
9. I'm hoping that the plan to establish a new Timber Rattlesnake population on Mt. Zion Island at Quabbin is successful, and that the public is kept informed of its progress, and that the remainder of Quabbin remains open to public access. It would also be nice if MassWildlife occasionally provided guided tours of Mt. Zion to interested members of the public once or twice a year to keep people informed of the status of the project.
10. The lack of effort the state has extended to involve the residents of Holyoke, reflective as none of the people on the in the working group community represents Holyoke, presents the perception of an environmental injustice by the Commonwealth on the residents of Holyoke.

Miscellaneous: Other Species

1. What to do about Copperheads, also on the endangered list, and they occupy the same hibernacula with Timber rattlers? The management recommendations for the Copperhead are essentially the same as for the Timber rattlesnake.
2. You say they keep the mice population down, so do Hog Nose snakes and they aren't deadly or venomous to humans.
3. I see no reason for not having a sanctuary for them. How about a sanctuary for copperheads, as well?

4. How large is the copperhead population compared to the rattlesnake population?
Assuming that the copperhead population is healthy, have you used this comparison to help opponents to the plan understand that they are more likely to encounter a copperhead than an endangered rattlesnake?
5. WHY WERE RATTLESNAKES CHOSEN? There are more important other species in need of saving in this state! Bats, turtles, birds. WHO chose rattlesnakes? That was dumbest thing ever! Things like this should be VOTED ON by registered voters! I LIVE in & PAY PROPERTY TAXES to Hardwick, I DO NOT WANT RATTLESNAKES HERE!

Miscellaneous: Other Questions/General Comments

1. What is the big rush now that gives The People a total of about 90 days when "Our" Government has had about 5 years, so far? What is the hurry?
 - How can we have a government "Of the People, By the People, For the People" when the Administrators, Regulators, and Experts, who run the day to day operations of Our Government just leave "The People" out of the loop?
2. Do you have any support from local organizations or towns?
3. Why is the overly fearful public allowed to control how the state responsibly manages wildlife? I feel that scientific evidence fully supports and mandates this project move ahead.
4. Does the science of the Conservation Plan include the issue of human community, and the value of human community NOT being impacted? The community needs peace and harmony, not the disruption being caused by this snake plan. Does Dr. French care about human beings? Is there any scientific study to show how harm would or would not be caused by the elimination of these snakes in MA?
5. If a majority of the residents of the communities surrounding Quabbin are opposed to the state placing Rattlesnakes here, why is this being forced upon us? I do not believe that rattlesnakes are more important than the perceived quality of life of the residents of our state and communities.
6. Why are the citizens of western MA again being treated as second class citizens? First our towns and homes are taken from us so we can be the source of drinking water for eastern MA. Now you decide we must take your poisonous snakes for you.
7. If Vermont is declining to reintroduce Rattlesnake populations due to the fear of the deadly fungus negating their efforts, why do we think we will be successful? Are we smarter than them? Do we have snakes that are immune? I am tired of the scientists saying, "The only place where successful reintroduction is guaranteed is Mt. Zion". It's not guaranteed anywhere.
8. People are more important than these Timber rattlesnakes. Interesting enough if they bite and people die from them then the conservation people won't care. But if residents start killing them they will fine you for it what's the logic behind that???? I live 5 min from mount tom and I don't believe that it is right of you to do that to the people around here to spread these snakes where they don't belong and are not wanted at all by anyone.
9. I am the first person to defend wildlife, but increasing Timber rattlesnakes to our area is irresponsible and not a smart thing to do. The fact that so many people are opposed to this should matter.
10. I question the entire plan. What will we "preserve" next, Bed bugs? Chlamydia? This is an astonishingly, mind-bogglingly bad idea.
11. I do not believe these poisonous snakes should be put where there are so many beautiful hiking trails and programs that introduce nature to the public. This would cause most people to refuse to go to Mt. Tom thus losing one of the Pioneer Valley's treasures.
12. Why waste more money? Why are they snakes desired? All the people who want the snakes so much can raise them in their back yards.

13. I am the first person to defend wildlife, but increasing Timber rattlesnakes to our area is irresponsible and not a smart thing to do. The fact that so many people are opposed to this should matter.
14. Are you people out of your minds? You seem to care more about snakes than people. I think you should really consider what you are proposing.
15. I believe that rattlesnakes are as harmless as honey bees. They will bite only if provoked in self defense! I have only heard of a few non fatal instances of a person being bitten by a rattlesnake in my lifetime! Most of these bites happened when people were either playing or harassing the snakes! Many people hike each year on Mt. Tekoa without a problem. This will be the same in Quabbin after rattlesnakes are released to create a new population!
16. All questions have been answered to my satisfaction. The Rattlesnake Conservation Plan is based on scientific evidence and proven data, and should be given the utmost consideration. The science speaks for itself.
17. I was impressed with the science at the public meeting in Athol. The big problem is that people won't listen if their preconceived ideas conflict with the scientists. It's a reflection of the current perception of scientific ideas throughout the country.
18. I believe there has been a large amount of scientific evidence presented and/or made available to the public. I have no further questions. The science presented has been thorough and adequate. I support this project 100%.
19. Your public presentation covered the plan and the problem very well and I have no questions. It is a worthy plan that will preserve the species for our State. I believe the plan was well founded in the results of multiple field research projects and I am pleased to have a rattlesnake population safely placed in the region where I live. I wish they were in my own back yard! I have hiked frequently in areas of MA where they are still found and I missed seeing them, so I have no fear of having them established on the island in the Quabbin Reservoir.
20. Several years ago, I saw a documentary on rattlesnakes in Texas and learned about rattlesnakes returning to their original dens year after year to nest –which is a problem when a suburb has been built on former nesting grounds. Since seeing this documentary, I've been a fan of rattlesnakes. Humans need to learn how to live with nature. I support your efforts to restore and protect our native Timber rattlesnakes and wish you all success.
21. I believe that people are confused as to how much risk this entails. They do not realize that fatal Rattlesnake bites are far and few between.
22. No, it seems everything has been discussed and re-discussed. I believe snakes play a part in nature. I like the idea of radio transmitters as part of learning more about rattlesnakes. I hike the Quabbin as much as I can. We have only come across one (I believe it was a rattlesnake) it was swimming and quickly moved away as soon as it sighted us.
23. I think the plan is based on excellent research and is a good wildlife management option. The Rattlesnake Conservation Plan is well conceived, is viable, and proposes little or no risk to humans.
24. I'm a hunter, fisherman, primarily in the Berkshires. I think that the fisheries and wildlife, and biologists should determine where to set up a colony of rattlesnakes. Not listen to all the uninformed, who see a threat behind every tree.
25. I believe the plan is very well thought out and grounded in the most current science available. Additionally I think the biologists are doing a great job with this project.
26. I claim to have no scientific knowledge on this topic. However I believe that these rattlesnakes are native to this area and should be protected and allowed to make a comeback. Even if occasionally it interferes with the lives of humans.
27. I don't have any questions; however, Mt. Tom is a perfect area. They won't bite you; we need to save this species.

28. I don't think establishing a population on My Zion will be easy, but it will be worth the effort.
29. I am an avid hiker and spent many years hiking the Blue Hills Reservation of Milton. I sometimes concentrated my hikes on the ledges known for having a population of the rattlesnakes, and I sometimes timed my hikes in hopes of seeing them (for instance, sunny days after cold nights in early fall). I never saw them and I never met anyone who saw them. They are extremely shy! I have lived in western Mass since 2002 and I hike the Quabbin reservation frequently (yesterday, for example). I hope the state will go forward with a conservation plan for these shy and endangered animals.
30. I am supportive of improving the genetic line of rattlesnakes in Massachusetts. I am concerned with the snakes in the Blue Hills being affected by the "white nose" syndrome or virus that is affecting their mouths and feeding habits. I hope their genetic pool can be strengthened by interbreeding.
31. I support this plan to save the rattlesnake specie. Mt. Tom is a perfect location. Hopefully this plan will be put into action soon.
32. I think it was a well thought out program.
33. I am perfectly comfortable with the conservation plan.
34. I believe DFW staff have accurately described the proposal. I feel that the information presented was based upon the best scientific evidence available and have no other questions about it.
35. I have no questions about the accuracy of the science behind the conservation plan.
36. I have no questions that have not been previously covered or answered. I think the team has done a wonderful job fielding questions and keeping the public in the loop. I trust the accuracy of the science behind the Conservation Plan and I strongly believe that the team behind this project is working in the best interest of both the local community and the rattlesnakes.
37. I totally support the plan to introduce the endangered reptiles into the Quabbin.
38. I do believe that any scientific evidence presented is accurate and complete.
39. This is a great plan, you're doing vital work, keep your heads up, you have support! Thank you!
40. If the science is sound and the reasons for the location on Mt. Zion make sense, then it should go forward as proposed. The presentation at the meeting on Tuesday in Belchertown by the state herp guy was excellent and made the case for a restricted site like Mt. Zion quite clear. Please do not let fear mongers in the media derail a well thought out plan. We are the stewards of the future. Please don't let this plan die. I do believe that a public meeting where the public can speak and be responded to by the knowledgeable people would be in the best interest of all.
41. Is it not your plan to do it anyways? Are you just appeasing us? Have you already done it?
42. We do not need rattlesnakes anywhere get rid of them all and especially do not put them at Mt Tom or anywhere else where people walk or go to play or where children are. I hate snakes and would be happy if they were extinct.
43. The group pushing this forward is full of insidious, sneaky and lying individuals who do not care about the opinions of those whose lives will be most impacted by the introduction of a highly snake population in their backyards. This was hardly a PUBLIC meeting! Give those opposed a chance to be heard to voice their legitimate concerns.
44. I believe that these scientists are not truthful on all that they say; I believe their only concern is their research. They need to take a look outside of their bubble and take into consideration that they are a true threat if someone is to be bitten, even if it is a slight chance as they say. Any chance is too great. Just like drinking and driving, any risk of driving intoxicated is too much of a risk to put others at harm's way.
45. I do not have much knowledge in science, that was never my best subject in school, but all animals should have their rights in certain areas I do not see a problem with releasing them into the Quabbin on the island or releasing a few on Mount Tom.

46. I have traveled around the U.S. and have encountered rattlesnakes while fishing in other parts of the country. I have almost been bitten several times and now no longer fish or hunt in those states. I believe those who want to release the snakes on the island have a hidden agenda to discourage hunting in the there.
47. How does the preservation of a deadly creature in a public area improve the quality of life and functionality of The Quabbin? How do, otherwise intelligent people, go through life so elitist and bankrupt of common sense? This is a major "I need to create a legacy" and have "nothing better to do" project. The only thing any of you will ultimately accomplish is the fatal wounding of a citizen. I suspect none of you will seriously care because of your great planned contribution to the world genome. This is a total joke.
48. I love the idea of having a sanctuary for rattlesnakes at Quabbin. I met one on the ridge that leads up to Mt. Tom above Holyoke Community College and we had a nice conversation. He let me know he (she) was displeased with my bothering him and hissed and bared his fangs. Then he rattled away. When he saw I was just keeping my distance and observing him, he got bored and went back into his lair. I also came close to stepping on a copperhead on Mt. Holyoke.
49. It's unbelievable of the arrogance demonstrated at the Meeting in Belchertown on February 28th by the Fish and Wildlife representatives. It's clear that you folks forgot who you work for. Disgraceful. Useless Survey and this initiative is clearly Fraud, Waste and Abuse.
50. Plain and simple this would be dumb to do. Don't do it. Plain and simple. I'd vote no on having this happen. Why would I want to go on a hike at Mt. Tom and have the chance of coming across Rattlesnakes? Just leave Mt. Tom how it is and leave these snakes out of Mass.
51. How can you ask if the public has further answers when the only response you have is when the agencies that support putting snakes in an area already the public uses is done with the agenda which first tries to pursue this by lying about Mt. Zion being an island and submitting this agenda further by saying this is safe further by saying the snakes cannot swim...the people who supported this agenda knew how flawed this attempt to locate snakes on Mt. Zion...but were hoping that any response from them would be enough to appease public sentiment due to their titles which in this case should have been more to protect the public from putting these snakes in an area that does not have such a large public recreational interest at this time.. shame on the people pursuing this agenda by having to lie because they could not have supported their agenda with the openness and truth... many people who use the Quabbin do so now without fear of while working there nor while enjoying this remarkable unique reservoir... this language was in the last meeting I attended in Belchertown so it is not so much to consider this now before implementing this agenda and creating the problem before it starts.. all avenues of who could get bit and how you would have to react to this problem have not been addressed at all... I am also aware of the many people who live in this area who are against this agenda..there are many places in the state that do not have as big of a public use as this particular peninsula...island ...whatever....I do not believe that any answer would convince me otherwise as my family has been going to this area most of my life....in fact my grandfather help build the Quabbin when he owned a farm in Ware...I do believe that the people who support this agenda want them to be put in an area where the snake will not have to be interacting with the public now and in the future....at least that is one thing we have in common...I only know that my many years fishing at Quabbin there are times when you have to walk off the boat to use the facilities also and unless you totally restrict use to the Quabbin this will remain to be an issue more and more over time for those who chose to not sit in front of a computer or the TV 24/7 as most people do now a days...if you are the type of person who chooses instead who wants to enjoy the outdoors..let us not do it in fear that the family members or friends get bit by this deadly and often times fatal snake....science includes many aspects to be considered...it is supposed to serve as a guide to those implementing policy to both humans and the

species in question...we live in a huge state with many more choices to consider than to regret this area as an acceptable site for use....hopefully common sense will prevail...

52. The last place I saw a rattlesnake, is now under 3 feet of water due to the over abundant and over protected beavers now in that area.
53. Stop the foolishness. This has gone on for over a year. You're not going to change the minds of those that suffer from ophidiophobia. You have more than 200 WMA's under your control. Pick those that will provide the right habitat for an eventual self-perpetuating population of Timber rattlesnakes, shut up, and stock those. They are native to Massachusetts and belong here. You're not stocking some exotic species. Did you have to "ask permission of the public" to stock red bellied cooters, wild turkeys, spadefoot toads, Blanding's turtles. etc.? Just do it!
54. I feel that with the many colleges in the area, that the fraternities will do dump stuff like for initiation. Example: Send a pledge to the island and retrieve snake eggs, or cut the rattle off the snake, or better yet bring some snakes back. I also fear that the snakes may get on driftwood and end up on shore, or maybe even swim. I once saw a rattlesnake show in Florida, and that's when I found out how fast a rattlesnake can swim, and it's natural to them.
55. Why do you persist in this horrible idea?
56. No questions. I fully support the un-eradication of these important predators into their natural ecosystem. Thank you for the work you are doing to help maintain a healthy ecosystem balance.
57. Why are you holding these meetings way out in Athol or Orange which is out of the way for many! I live in Hardwick & attended a make shift meeting in Belchertown, MA. Why don't you hold these meetings in the townships where the people live who this will affect? Anybody that thinks there is a shortage of poisonous snakes around and wants to add more must be gaining something off of this. No more rattlesnakes. Oh yeah, I dare you to try swimming across lake brae on top of the mountain. Make sure you have antivenin with you.
58. I thought that the MA Fish & Wildlife agency experts did a good job explaining all aspects of what this project would entail during the hearings that took place in Athol. I trust the hired experts who know much more about the biological and ecological aspects and potential impacts than the outspoken layman.
59. I live at the base of Mt Tom, it is my backyard playground along with so many others. You wanna piss off a whole ton of people? Chose this as your viper pit and whoever made those final decisions might find them in their backyard!!!
60. Just, WHY??? Please don't bring rattlesnakes to Mt Tom. A lot of us like to use it for hiking, mountain biking, bringing our children & older parents to enjoy one of the most magnificent views of the Pioneer Valley.
61. Good luck to getting people to understand the science behind the plan and the extremely low risk it is to the general population. Fear is more powerful than logic it seems to me. If you can find any way to dispel that fear, it would help public acceptance.
62. Why is Sec. Beaton reneging on his agreement (given at the Athol meeting) that the state would follow the Working Groups recommendation? Now it is being said the state will "take the recommendation into consideration." Is Beaton's word good or not? The science is most likely accurate. It is the process and total disregard for any of citizen's concerns/feelings that makes this unacceptable.
63. We believe that MassWildlife's plan to introduce a small number (likely less than 10 individuals per year) of timber rattlesnakes to Mount Zion Island, over a few years, is based on sound science with a goal of promoting the long-term survival of this species with essentially no risk to the general public. We recognize that introduction of the timber rattlesnake to Mount Zion Island has garnered some opposition based on fear and the cultural stigma associated with venomous snakes. We also recognize that some aspects of rattlesnake biology as well as some of the details about

MassWildlife's proposal have been inaccurately reported by the media and led to greater public opposition than might otherwise have been realized.

64. Like most wildlife, rattlesnakes will detect humans before they arrive and try to get away from us...It is truly ironic that people fear rattlesnakes because we are the ones who decimated them. But I am well aware that there is a general fear of snakes in general, no matter what the species, a fear shared by my mother, grandmother and many others I know...Given the precarious situation of this endangered species (endangered by us), I hope you will move ahead with your well-considered plan.
65. ...Mass Audubon affirms our support for the Division of Fisheries & Wildlife's (MassWildlife's) comprehensive Rattlesnake Conservation Strategy. Based on sound conservation science, the strategy includes a suite of actions intended to halt the precipitous population decline of the critically imperiled timber rattlesnake (*Crotalus horridus*) in Massachusetts. Importantly, the strategy includes actions directed toward protecting five extant populations of this species, and toward establishing a new population wholly on isolated protected land...Additionally, the establishment of a new rattlesnake population on protected land, such as on Mt. Zion within the Quabbin Reservation, would provide a needed buffer against the loss of this magnificent and maligned animal from the state's natural heritage.
66. I am writing in full support of our endangered rattlesnakes. I believe their numbers are depleted only because of the mess we always make of things. I fully support their release in those places where they already exist. I say, just quietly release them, and leave those locations protected and unknown. My overwhelming concern is that if their locations are known, people will intentionally set out to kill them...Hysteria makes for dead animals, and the current media frenzy about the rattlers is putting their future in jeopardy.
67. I have field experience working on conservation of timber rattlesnakes in MA. With that background I have reviewed the proposal for establishing a colony of rattlesnakes in Quabbin Reservoir. It is scientifically sound, appropriate and safe. The only significant risk of snake bite is for the people working on the project and given their expertise, that is small. The risk for the public is almost zero.
68. I simply want to support your efforts in placing these beautiful animals wherever you deem most suitable for them. We are the reason they are close to extinction. Be it the Quabbin, Mt Tom or in the Berkshires, release them. People's knee-jerking hysteria needs to be ignored. You'll never achieve release of the rattlesnakes because people will continue to whine and object. Yes, it can be scary to encounter a rattlesnake on a hiking trail (been there, done that). But staying quiet and letting the critter move on is simple enough. They have no interest in us whatsoever, with good reason.
69. Personally I do not feel that it is necessary to import these reptiles into our area. I as someone who lives and hikes etc. this area and do not wish to encounter any of these creatures. Just simply don't understand the benefit vs. the human population having to cohabitate with them.
70. I fully support the Rattlesnake Conservation Plan and putting rattlesnakes on the Quabbin.
71. I support the project of establishing a rattlesnake population on Mt. Zion 150%.
72. I would argue this issue is far greater than the preservation of our native species. This is about how we decide environmental policy in the Commonwealth. Do we base our decision on logic and reason? Or do we only read the cover of the book and make our decision based on fear? The risk to public safety here seems astronomically low and the concerns of many in the public seem to be based not on evidence, but instead on a popular distaste for snakes in general. Our personal fears should never supersede reality. I fully support Mass Wildlife's efforts to protect this species and every other native species that exists in our Commonwealth.
73. I was at the meeting in Belchertown when Dr. Jones made his proposal for the protection of rattlesnakes in MA and I support that proposal, particularly the introduction on Mt. Zion.

74. I've spent a fair amount of time hiking in rattlesnake habitat out in the Berkshires and in the Quabbin where they used to live, and I have never seen one. There's a very small population now, and even if there was a small additional population added, these are not an aggressive animal. They're not waiting to spring on people. You'll probably never see the additional ones. They have a right to live.
75. This is important to a lot of us. I really don't want to see rattlesnakes lost here; it's a native species. I don't have any fear of snakes; it's not a big deal to me. Any that I've tried to approach have just fled out of fear. I'd be lucky to even get a look or a photograph. There are very few places left where they can survive, and we are on the verge of losing them in our state.
76. I built a house on Rattlesnake Ridge and raised my children there. I spent three years at a school in CT right at the base of a mountain with a den of rattlesnakes. The only experience we had with them was the kids used to sneak out at night when they came out on the warm road, and no one ever got hurt. I spent a lot of time hiking and I never found one even though I was looking for them. They were not a problem.
77. I'm a nature nut and am out looking for snakes all of the time. I've never seen a rattlesnake in the wild except the west and southwest. I've never had a problem with them. They tend to keep to themselves. I would love to have rattlesnakes right in my backyard.
78. This Rattlesnake Conservation Plan is craziness. There is no reason to inhabit Quabbin Island w/ poisonous snakes. Moreover... rattlesnakes CAN AND DO SWIM!... I am very disappointed with Mass Wildlife in supporting this "Conservation Plan".
79. I support the State's plan for establishing a small colony of timber rattlesnakes on Mt. Zion Island. I believe it is a well-thought out, sound, and yet low-risk plan for restoring native biodiversity to the Commonwealth.
80. Although many people are afraid of snakes, we in Massachusetts are smarter than allowing irrational fears overrule our logic and the greater fear of extinction. We are not afraid of science as we have the best science institutions in the country here in Massachusetts, and we are proud of our legacy of scientific and logical thinking. We are not afraid to speak up in these days when rumors and anti-scientific thinking are being promoted nationally. We are better than that. We cannot let an animal disappear from Massachusetts on our watch.
81. The presence of rattlesnakes at the adjoining Taconic State Park, NY and Mt. Washington State Park, MA does not seem to be a deterrent to hikers from either state, and both summits in the parks, Alander Mountain, MA and Brace Mountain, NY remain very popular. Rattlesnakes traverse the state border, and are present at both parks...Hikers do report timber rattlesnake sightings, and that is usually a source of excitement. There have not been any incidents with people that I know of...Taconic State Park is a very busy park popular for active and challenging recreation, and the snakes have had no negative effect on the popularity of the park.

2) Information Provided (must include citation to be included)

Science: Biology

1. <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/mystery-fungus-killing-snakes-in-several-different-states/>
 - Will the fungus spread to other snakes too?
2. Introduced species become invasive species and become a pest. U.S. Executive Order 13112 (1999) "defines an invasive species as an alien species whose introduction does or is likely to cause economic or environmental harm to human health. ...organisms have and continue to be introduced to areas in which they are not native, sometimes with but usually without much regard

to the harm that could result. Species may escape...and subsequently establish independent breeding populations."

Science: Timber Rattlesnake Habitat/Population

1. "...there continues to be a need to limit and eliminate trails on public lands near dens and basking areas and implement seasonal road closures in areas of high vehicle caused mortality." NH&ESP Fact Sheet (updated 2015)
 - Why the continuing loss of dens and what are you going to do about it?
2. I read the Timber Rattlesnake factsheet written by Mass Fish and Wildlife. The very last sentence is, "Frequent disclosure of dens and basking areas between enthusiastic individuals through verbal, photo, and digital means continues to place this species at risk." Does that mean there are more than what we know about? But if we say we see them we are putting them at risk.

Safety Studies

1. "...there continues to be a need to limit and eliminate trails on public lands near dens and basking areas and implement seasonal road closures in areas of high vehicle caused mortality." NH&ESP Fact Sheet (updated 2015)
 - Have you hired and trained more park rangers?
 - Have you increased public education efforts?
 - Do you have any initiatives with the Environmental Police?
2. "While rattlesnakes are perfectly good swimmers, their survival depends on access to unusually deep hibernation sites (hibernacula), usually in a rock talus or boulder field below a ledge, or a deep fissure in bedrock." NHESP website - Endangered Rattlesnake Conservation
 - Why are you considering putting these rattlesnakes near people's houses, onto Mt. Zion Island in the Quabbin Reservoir, which also has a connecting causeway?
3. The area hospitals are not equipped with antivenin, which in 2008 was at the cost of \$15,000 for several vials of antidote needed for a single patient's treatment. (citation: "Springfield Man in 'good' condition following attack by venomous snake" by George Graham, The Republican Newsroom on June 16, 2008 at 3:25 PM, updated June 16, 2008 at 7:43 PM)
4. The Arizona Poison and Drug Information Center states that less than 1% of people bitten by all poisonous snakes in the US are fatal. I've vacation in AZ every year for the past 20 years, much of it in desert or rocky slopes. I often see rattlers, but they don't threaten me at all if I follow just a few simple precautions. And AZ definitely has a healthy rattlesnake population (17 different species). (<http://azpoison.com/venom/rattlesnakes>)
5. According to the Harris Poll of fears—snakes are the No. 1 fear. 63% are somewhat fearful of snakes, 36% are very fearful and 1% are not. Some of these fears are rational, some are not. There is a rational fear or concern of poisonous snakes that according to Dr. Steve Johnson, Univ. of Fla., bite 7,000 to 8,000 people in the U.S. annually of which 6 die. Thousands of pets, especially dogs, are also bitten, although death statistics are not kept. Snake boots, gaiters and chaps are commonly worn by outdoor workers, hunters, fishermen and other outdoor recreationists in high poisonous snake areas. Checking for poisonous snakes before letting children out to play in the yard only makes common sense where these snakes are commonly found. Being aware of, and looking out for poisonous snakes only makes sense in areas where contact between people and snakes is possible.
 - Since rational fear or serious concern of poisonous snakes, as well as natural fear of snakes in general, create a difficult atmosphere to gain support from the public and certainly no approval [and apparently no desire by the Rattlesnake Project] to locate poisonous snakes where human activities and snake populations would overlap, why would Mass. Wildlife invest in a project that

has nowhere else to go even if successful? Is it not basically just an expensive zoo and serve no real benefit to the public or to the timber rattlesnake?

Logistical Studies

1. "MassWildlife is exploring the feasibility of restoring rattlesnakes to a protected site within the original range of the species as an urgently needed action to offset continued rapid decline. This effort will preserve genetic diversity and help ensure continued survival of the species should conservation efforts at one of more existing sites fail." Executive Summary
 - If conservation efforts are successful at two or more sites, this stop gap plan will not be needed. Right?
 - The Plan implementation is contingent upon sites failing. What is failure and how do you measure it?
 - How many can fail before it becomes necessary to act?
 - To implement now, aren't you assuming current effort will fail with extirpation at the five remaining sites?
 - If you were going to save at least one of the sites for sure, what would you need?
 - What do you need to do to avoid failure?
 - What are the results of repopulating Blue Hills?
 - Can one of more of the other sites be repopulated? Now or concurrently with Blue Hills?
 - What do you need to adequately secure the sites and avoid extirpation?
2. The North Worcester County Quabbin Anglers and the Quabbin Fisherman Association provided a series of extracts (with web links) resulting from an internet search on "Relocating Timber Rattlesnakes". "Everything we found said either don't do it, or if you do, it should be for short distances and into sites where there is an existing population of the same species." If we take an endangered species and do something that has already been done and has already been proven not to work, then it's going to be a wasted effort. Please look into this further. (Citations provided in document)

Access & Enforcement Studies

1. "...there continues to be a need to limit and eliminate trails on public lands near dens and basking areas and implement seasonal road closures in areas of high vehicle caused mortality." NH&ESP Fact Sheet (updated 2015)
 - Have you made any lasting decisions about road and trail closures and public access to den sites on a consistent basis?
 - Can you show us the seasonal road closure plans for all five dens?
2. "...imperiled by destruction of rocky and woodland habitats, excessive removal by collectors, and mortality and persecution at the hands of snake hunters and the general public." NH&ESP Fact Sheet (updated 2015)
 - There are five dens remaining; two of them in jeopardy. As recent as 2012 James Condon, an unemployed pastry chef, allegedly was permitted to visit Blue Hills 4 to 5 times a week in snake season painting rattler tails. At the May 2016 hearing, a Friend of the Blue Hills said, "It took me three years to find those snakes. I made it my personal mission." Was anyone prosecuted? How are you controlling public access?